

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 11264

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TAGS: MASS ESTC VE CU US

SUBJ: POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS OF VENEZUELAN FLAG TRADE WITH CUBA

REF: A STATE 249469, B STATE 248575, C STATE 244448

1. ON READING TWELVE COUNTRY DECLARATION EMANATING FROM QUITO CONFERENCE (REF A) AND STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO FONMIN SCHACHT AS WELL AS HIS OWN REMARK TO ME ON EVE OF HIS DEPARTURE FOR QUITO THAT " MANY COUNTRIES" IRRESPECTIVE OF THE OUTCOME OF THE QUITO CONFERENCE WOULD RESUME ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH CUBA, DEPT SHOULD BE ALERTED TO POSSIBILITY THAT INDEED IN FAIRLY NEAR FUTURE VENEZUELA WILL RESUME SUCH RELATIONS AND VENEZUELAN FLAG VESSELS WILL TRADE TO CUBA.

2. WE NOTE FROM PARA FIVE REF B THAT DEPT'S BACKGROUND POSITION ON POSSIBLE SANCTIONS AGAINST OAS MEMBER STATES TRADING TO CUBA, AND WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO SUCH ARGENTINE TRADE, CONCLUDED THAT "THERE IS NO REQUIREMENT, LEGISLATIVE OR OTHERWISE, THAT THE US WITHDRAW ITS MILITARY ASSISTANCE GROUP FROM AN OAS MEMBER-STATE WHOSE SHIPS CARRY CARGO TO CUBA(AS ARGENTINE SHIPS HAVE DONE)." THIS BACKGROUNDER IN PARA EIGHT GOES ON TO SAY THAT PROVISIONS OF THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT CONCERNED WITH THE CARRIAGE OF CARGO TO CUBA APPLY ONLY TO GRANT ASSISTANCE AND THAT THERE IS NO GRANT ASSISTANCE TO ARGENTINA AT THIS TIME.

3. AS DEPT IS AWARE, THE US DOES PROVIDE A MODEST
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AMOUNT OF GRANT ASSISTANCE, APPROXIMATELY ONE MILLION DOLLARS

A YEAR, TO VENEZUELA FOR TRAINING PURPOSES, ADMINISTERED THROUGH OUR MILITARY GROUP.

4. LAST YEAR (REF C) THE DEPT STATED THAT THERE COULD BE NO EXCEPTIONS IN THE EVENT OF THE TRANSPORT OF MATERIALS, COMMODITIES, OR OTHER CARGO TO OR FROM CUBA IN VENEZUELAN PLANES OR SHIPS WITHOUT A SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION AUTHORIZING FURTHER AID EXPENDITURES AS "IMPORTANT TO THE SECURITY OF THE US." THE DEPT (PARA D REF C) WENT ON TO STATE THAT "SANCTIONS WOULD INVOLVE TERMINATION OF THE USE OF ASSISTANCE FUNDS WITH RESPECT TO BOTH MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS."

5. IN VIEW OF THE CONTRADICTORY NATURE OF THE DEPT'S STATEMENT IN REF B AS CONTRASTED WITH LAST DECEMBER'S STATEMENT IN REF C, WE SHOULD APPRECIATE GUIDANCE AS TO WHERE WE STAND WITH REGARD TO THE ONWARD CONTINUANCE OF OUR HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MILITARY GROUP IN THE EVENT THAT IN FACT VENEZUELA DOES START SENDING CARGO IN NATIONAL FLAG SHIPS OR PLANES TO AND FROM CUBA. OBVIOUSLY, IN VIEW OF FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER GARCIA VILLASMIL'S ATTACK ON OUR MILGRP IN CURRENT EDITION OF "SEMANA" (CARACAS 11260). SHOULD WE UNDER OUR OWN STATUTORY COMPULSION DECIDE TO CLOSE THE MILGROUP IN REPRISAL OVER CUBA, THE STAGE WOULD NOT BE FELICITOUSLY SET FOR THAT "CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE" FOR WHICH WE ARGUED IN CARCAS 11246.
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